

Coins

Flop or no flop, the new Anthony dollar's look is here to stay

By Roger Boye

ALTHOUGH THE Susan B. Anthony dollar has flopped so far, the Treasury Department has no immediate plans to change the coin's color or shape.

Several coinage experts have suggested that the dollar be made of brass or another alloy so people wouldn't confuse it with a quarter. Others have proposed that the coin be given a multisided outer border for easy identification.

But those and other recommendations were tested and rejected months ago for "valid technical reasons," Bette B. Anderson, Treasury undersecretary, told a congressional subcommittee late last month.

For example, she said a brass coin would necessitate additional changes in some vending machines, and would not wear as well as the copper-nickel clad material now used.

Even without changes, the dollar eventually will be used in daily business transactions, Anderson insisted.

"We feel that acceptance will accelerate once a significant portion of automated equipment — vending machines, various transportation systems, and the like — are adapted for the use of the dollar coin," she said.

Despite such reassurances from Anderson and others, some congressmen still believe a change of the coin's color is needed. Accordingly, the Treasury Department is conducting a new series of alloy tests, although any possible change would be months away.

WHEN THE Treasury Department released the report of a study committee last month, recommendations to phase out the dollar bill captured the headlines.

But the big news for many collectors was a less-publicized suggestion that the government mint special half-dollars "as a numismatic item."

Some hobbyists believe the proposal could lead eventually to the production of commemorative half-dollars.